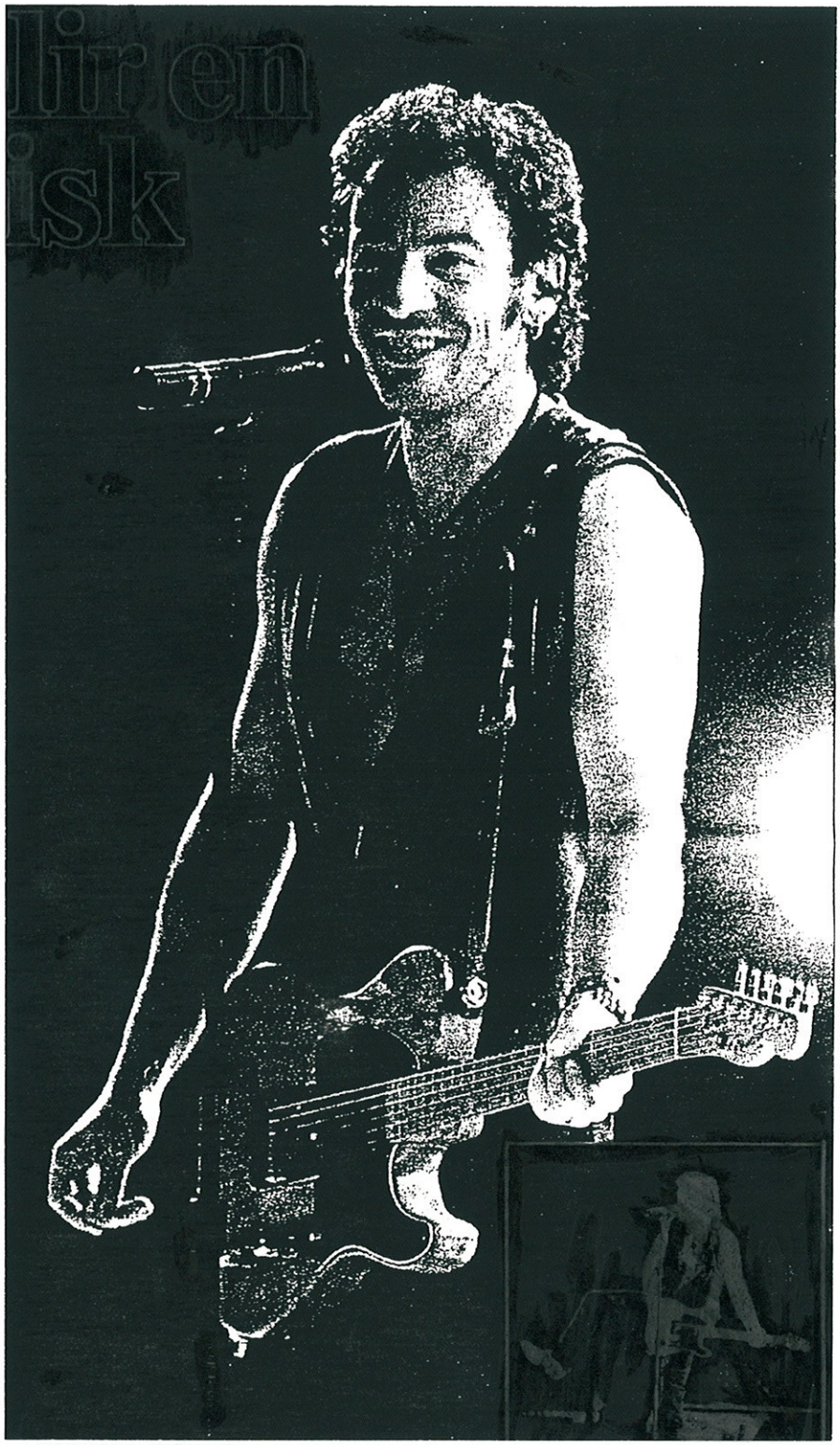
two albums - - two tours - - two mags

BRUCE
SPRINGSTEEN
Wembley Arena
London

Springsteen



LIVE PROOF

Finally, we were ready. It was still hard to believe we'd be seeing Bruce indoors again in London for the first time in 11 years. As a result, the shows were a mixture of the sense of the present with vivid flashbacks to '81. Even Bruce remarked on the occasion, not just revisiting London after a long time, but 'with a roof on!'

In front of the typically demanding first night crowd, he was remarkably relaxed and carefree; on previous tours, this city had always been The Big Test.

After years of stadiums, it felt strange to walk freely to within yards of the stage and to have a reserved seat again! Not having to line up for hours to get close, we were in place minutes before showtime, so that it all seemed to start so suddenly.

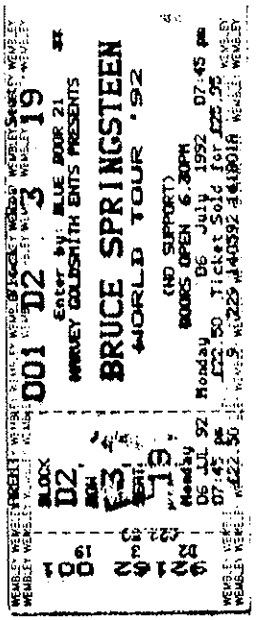
It was wonderful to be close enough to see every expression again, something I'd sorely missed since 1981, and which a generation of stadium-goers have never experienced for the most part. In the words of the old cliché, you just had to BE there. His happiness was contagious, more complete than ever. Another flashback was the vision of the constant drip from his elbows, something I always associated with the 'River' tour.

So many highlights, both new and old, such as 'Badlands'; the 'Leap of Faith' along the front row; the inspired sequence from 'Souls of the Departed' through 'The Star Spangled Banner' into 'Born In The USA'; 'Thunder Road', every night, dedicated to the older fans; hilariously screwing up the words to 'Dancing In The Dark'(a great new version); 'If I Should Fall Behind'; 'Living Proof'; a rare 'Big Muddy'; 'Roll Of The Dice' complete with inflatable dice! 'Real World', a gospel hymn; 'Light Of Day', which just got better each show (with 'I Hear A Train' once); 'Prove It All Night' with a new guitar break; and a farewell 'Follow That Dream'...and this is just the start of the tour. See you in '93!

Dedicated to the 'Human Town' gang.

Dan
London, August '92

The London concerts: selected reviews

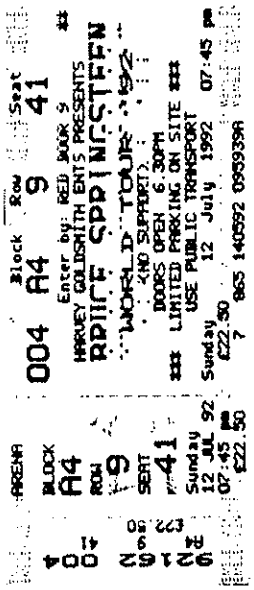


6 July 1992

Better Days
Star Spangled Banner/
Born In The USA
Local Hero
Darkness On The Edge Of Town
If I Should Fall Behind
57 Channels
The River
Living Proof
My Hometown
Badlands
Leap Of Faith
Man's Job
Roll Of The Dice

Lucky Town
Cover Me
Brilliant Disguise
With Every Wish
Souls Of The Departed
Human Touch
Bobby Jean
Light Of Day

Glory Days
Working On The Highway
Hungry Heart
Thunder Road (acoustic)
Born To Run
My Beautiful Reward

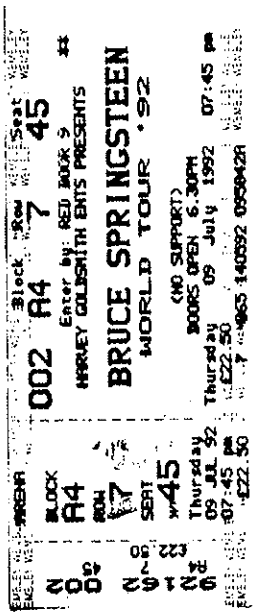


12 July 1992

Better Days
Local Hero
Lucky Town
Dancing In The Dark
Darkness On The Edge Of Town
If I Should Fall Behind
57 Channels
The Big Muddy
Living Proof
My Hometown
Leap Of Faith
Man's Job
Roll Of The Dice

Cover Me
Brilliant Disguise
With Every Wish
Souls Of The Departed
Star Spangled Banner/Born In The USA
Real World
Light Of Day

Glory Days
Bobby Jean
Hungry Heart
Thunder Road (acoustic)
Born To Run
My Beautiful Reward

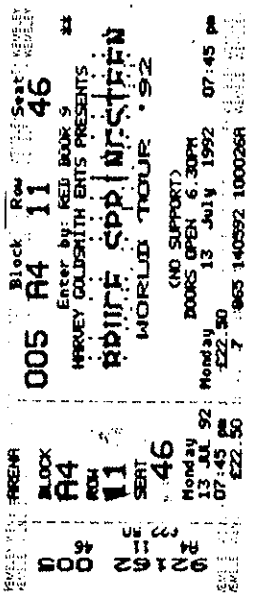


9 July 1992

Better Days
Star Spangled Banner/
Born In The USA
Local Hero
Dancing In The Dark
Darkness On The Edge Of Town
If I Should Fall Behind
57 Channels
The River
Living Proof
My Hometown
Leap Of Faith
Man's Job
Roll Of The Dice

Lucky Town
Cover Me
Brilliant Disguise
Tougher Than The Rest
Real Man
With Every Wish
Real World
Light Of Day

Glory Days
Working On The Highway
Bobby Jean
Hungry Heart
Thunder Road (acoustic)
Born To Run
My Beautiful Reward

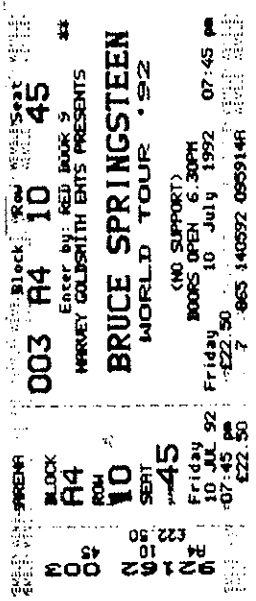


13 July 1992

Better Days
Local Hero
Lucky Town
Dancing In The Dark
Darkness On The Edge Of Town
If I Should Fall Behind
57 Channels
The River
Living Proof
My Hometown
Leap Of Faith
Man's Job
Roll Of The Dice

Prove It All Night
Cover Me
Brilliant Disguise
Tougher Than The Rest
Real Man
Thunder Road (acoustic)
Bobby Jean
Light Of Day

Human Touch
Glory Days
Working On The Highway
Hungry Heart
Follow That Dream
Born To Run
My Beautiful Reward

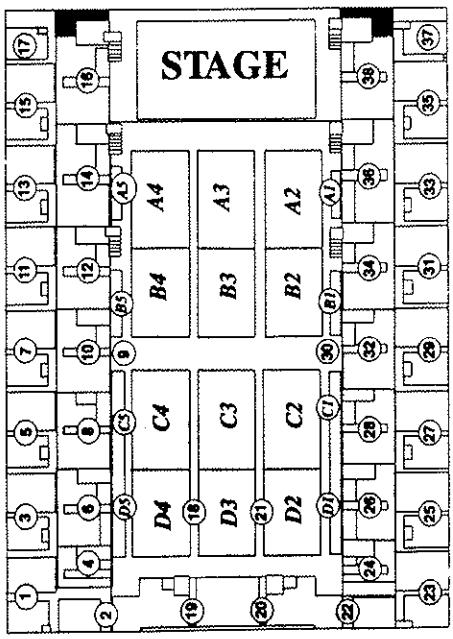


10 July 1992

Better Days
Local Hero
Lucky Town
Dancing In The Dark
Darkness On The Edge Of Town
If I Should Fall Behind
57 Channels
The River
Living Proof
My Hometown
Leap Of Faith
Man's Job
Roll Of The Dice

Cover Me
Brilliant Disguise
With Every Wish
Souls Of The Departed
Star Spangled Banner/Born In The USA
Real World
Light Of Day/I Hear A Train

Glory Days
Bobby Jean
Hungry Heart
Thunder Road (acoustic)
Born To Run
My Beautiful Reward



Arena End Stage

Bruce is worth shouting about

ROCK / David Cheal, at Wembley Arena, finds the denim-clad hero is far from over the hill

IT's being said that **Bruce Springsteen** is not the man he used to be; that the career of one of the world's most successful rock stars hangs in the balance. Evidence in support of this is the poor commercial performance of the two albums he released simultaneously earlier this year after an agonising five-year silence. Both records — *Human Touch* and *Lucky Town* — have performed solidly but unspectacularly, reflecting agreement that while they have some excellent songs, these are spread rather thinly.

Then there's the fact that the man who made his name writing about loneliness, yearning, anger and aspiration appears to have discovered a gentler emotion — contentment. This in itself is not surprising. He is unimaginably rich and successful, having apparently fulfilled the improbable claims made during his early years that he was "the future of rock 'n' roll"; he has emerged from an unhappy marriage and messy divorce and is now married to a spectacularly beautiful woman, his former backing singer Patti Scialfa; and he is, by all accounts, a devoted father of their children. But, given the discrepancy between his personal circumstances and his cowboy-boots-and-denim persona, can he really go on singing of the heroism, drama and romance inherent in the lives — and cars — of ordinary people, and still make it convincing?

It would appear so. **Wembley Arena**, where his world tour is currently in residence for five nights, greeted the appearance of Springsteen and his band with a standing ovation before they'd even played a note. For a few worrying moments it did seem that there was a certain amount of booing coming from the audience, but this turned out to be the clarion call of Springsteen devotees the world over: "Brooooooooooce!"

The opening number, *Better Days*, reflected the strengths of the best of Springsteen's new set of songs: uplifting, reflective, melodic and displaying a rare lightness of touch. What followed was a judicious and expertly paced mixture of new tunes and what Springsteen himself affectionately referred to as "the old shit". Included in the former were *Local Hero*, *Leap of Faith* and the exquisitely menacing *Souls of the Departed*, all of which used to full effect Springsteen's gospel-esque posse of five backing singers; old favourites, meanwhile, such as *Born in the USA* (his worst song of the night — a hideous wall of noise), *Darkness on the Edge of Town*, *The River* and *Badlands* kept the crowd on their feet.

In fact, whatever Bruce did, he was cheered for it. He played a heartfelt but technically undemanding harmonica solo: rapture. He chatted about his songs: joy. He quoted nursery rhymes to illustrate stories about his children: ecstasy. At one point he only had to say, "I wrote this song in 1982" to be met with a chorus of cheers. Few artists alive today can generate such devotion, passion, excitement and loyalty.

Springsteen returns this devotion with dedication, giving performances legendary for their energy and duration. He never stopped moving, prowling restlessly, thrashing mercilessly at his Telecaster, dancing like a saddle-sore cowpoke. Moreover, after an hour and a half, when most artists would be starting to think about heading back to their hotels, Bruce had an interval.

There followed more of the same, but louder. Much louder. As the crowd roared, the band soared. *Hungry Heart* was a joyful singalong; *Thunder Road* was pure poetry; *Born to Run* was unconvincing.

And that, we all thought, was that. But no. Bruce's poor, exhausted drummer almost had to be carried back on to his stool for one final fling. Fortunately, *My Beautiful Reward* demanded little of him other than timekeeping. There was little protest from fans when the ensemble disappeared for the very last time: nervous glances at watches revealed that the last Underground train was about to leave. He may never again achieve the dizzy heights of the mid-1980s, but there is no doubt about it: Springsteen is back.

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
Wembley Arena, London

THE MEDIA KNIVES may be out for Springsteen but tickets for his five sold-out London shows were changing hands at well above face value outside the 12,000-seat Wembley Arena. Inside, nobody was complaining about being short-changed, either.

Following concerts in Sweden, France, Italy, and Germany—and preceding his U.S. tour that opens Thursday (23) in his home state of New Jersey—Springsteen celebrated his return to the English-speaking world by playing a four-hour show on the first night at Wembley July 6. And none of the other four nights ran less than three hours.

More than half the show was made up of songs from the "Human Touch" and "Lucky Town" albums. More significantly, there was almost nothing from before "The River," with the notable exception of "Darkness On The Edge Of Town." But then the audience, mostly the generation that picked up on Springsteen with "Born In The U.S.A.," had no problem with the lack of nostalgia. Indeed, it was clear that several tracks from the new albums, particularly "Roll Of The Dice," "All Or Nothing At All," and "Real World," are already taking on anthemic qualities to judge from both the performance and the audience reaction.

Springsteen seems to have developed a sharper sense of self-perspective than his critics. Having dispensed with the E Street Band, apart from Roy Bittan on keyboards, he is now shaping the next phase of his career. His song selection means that the absence of the E Street Band is less noticeable than it would be if he was playing more of the '70s material and trying to recreate the same manic energy.

Instead, the energy has become more focused, although the sweat still pours off him and he's not above pulling the old James Brown exhaustion routine at the end of a 15-minute version of "Glory Days." Or suddenly jumping down into the photo pit. Or leading his band on a conga dance around the stage.

His new band may lack character but it provided everything required in terms of backup, pacing, and mood. And the five backing singers, including R&B veteran Bobby King, added a gospel fervor to several songs, especially "Leap Of Faith," as Springsteen brought them forward to testify.

As if to emphasize his awareness of his current status, Springsteen reminded his audience more than once that he is 42 years old with a young family. But even though he is growing up ahead of his fans (he wasn't exactly swamped with shouts when he asked how many of them had children) he can still articulate their fears and doubts because, in essence, he is still one of them. There are still no trappings of wealth or ego on stage, just a little of that human touch.

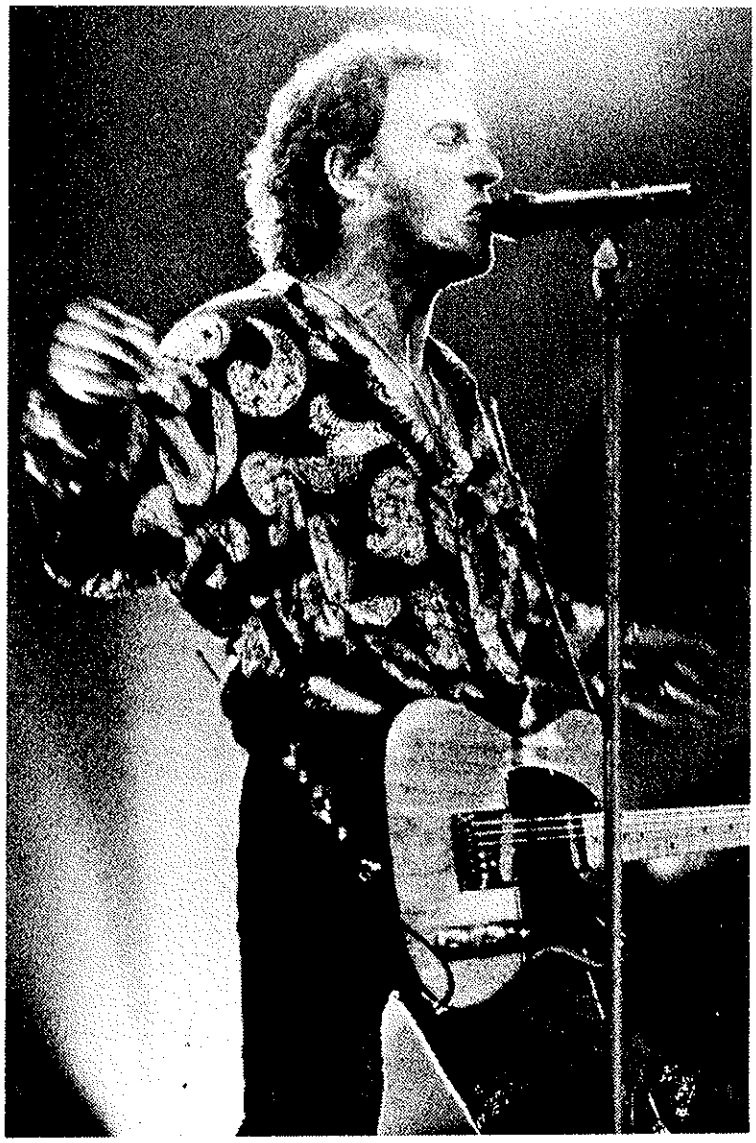
HUGH FIELDER

BILLBOARD JULY 25, 1992

Bizarre

By PIERS MORGAN

THE SUN July 7/92



BRUCE . . . last night Picture: DAVE HOGAN

BRUCE KING-STEEN

Caught Live

★ BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN kicked off the British leg of his European tour last night—and proved he is still the Boss at 42.

When he struck up his classic The River, 12,000 fans at Wembley Arena belted out every word.

Springsteen has been accused of losing his hard edge after settling down with two young children and moving from New Jersey to an L.A. mansion. Sales of his two new albums have been disappointing.

★ But he didn't hide the fact that his priorities have changed in middle-age. Introducing My Home Town, he said: "I wanna do this from my children to your children." And he dedicated If I Should Fall Behind to wife Patti, saying: "you need someone to help you with the s***."

★ Gone were the bandana and the torn jeans as Bruce wore plain black trousers. The famous E Street Band had also been ditched.

But none of it mattered to his loyal followers. After every song cries of "Bruce, Bruce, Bruce" rang round the arena.

SMELLS LIKE SPRINGSTEEN SP... (Enough! – Ed)

18 July 1992 New Musical Express

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

LONDON
WEMBLEY ARENA

WHAT YOU come away with after three-and-a-half hours of despatches from 20 years of Bruce history – apart from the rambling monologues about fatherhood, apart from the flaming, scourging NEIL YOUNG EAT SHIT guitar breaks, apart from the uplift and vigour of a man spoiling for a fight – are indelible images. Images struck in the heat and fury of a night where glimpses of hope and humour are offset by darkness, foreboding and pained longing.

Springsteen, the most scrupulously cinematic rock star, is a performer whose work owes as much to the celluloid explorations of John Ford and Martin Scorsese as the rock 'n' soul lineage that is his lifeblood. There's a theatricality that informs his live presence and brings his characters to life. Perhaps his greatest gift – and, after Presley, it makes him virtually unique in rock – is to match the imagery of his songs with the images he casts onstage.

The last time he played London, Springsteen's show was over-wrought, stadium-sized, starting to run on routine formulae. His music had moved onto a different stage but he was still drawn to the pounding, brawny declamations that accompanied the 'Born In The USA' elevation to megastardom. The profound shift that began on 'Tunnel Of Love' continues on his latest albums where intimate confessions are accompanied by reappraisal and reassessment. With an all-new band, a wealth of new material and the smallest venues he's played in over a decade, Springsteen seemed ready to meet the challenge to move on.

Round about 8pm he hit the stage, not running but waving. He grins, pulls faces, strikes all manner of poses with his guitar and moves among his all-new (bar soul survivor keyboard player Roy Bittan) post E Street Band. Guitarists Shane Fontayne and headband-wearing vocal harmoniser Crystal Taliefero are his immediate foils. As befits the tender, thoughtful approach to manhood/fatherhood evident in Bruce's baby-boom songs, the latter is a sexy, knowing compadre-in-arms replacement for Clarence Clemons. She blows sax too, but only briefly, during the penultimate 'Born To Run'. The other major change are the judiciously used five back-up singers, including duet partner Bobby King.

The opening 'Better Days' is a grim declaration where sour memory undercuts mindless triumphalism. When he sings the wry, deflating line *"It's a sad funny ending to find yourself pretending/A rich man in a poor man's shirt"*, he pauses to put hand on heart, give a little bow of the head and a smile of recognition. A gesture that says, 'yup folks, that was me, a millionaire rock star and blue collar hero', a gesture that signals a man coming to terms with his myth.

Moving through some early jarring sound problems, the new Springsteen outfit takes shape, breathing life and vitality into his old narratives from the beleaguered heartland and the songs that come to terms with his position in the aftermath of mass fame, collapsing capitalism and the war waged on the working class characters whose lives he has detailed. In an almost unbearably crude, nasty and punishing 'Born In The USA' his voice is that of guttersnipe vermin helplessly clinging to his supposed birthright.

There's a stark swooning dive into 'Darkness On The Edge Of Town', its spoken word interludes and eerie harmonies making it an altogether different beast to the wracked, blood-boiling version on the box set. '57 Channels' becomes a whole new ballgame too, remixed and remodelled in the wake of the LA riots. The stage is bathed in strobes and searchlights, sirens, break beats and sampled harangues from the battlefront jostle in the confusion.

Springsteen's opening monologue is drowned out in angry chants of "No Peace, No Justice". Wedding the frustration of the Hollywood hill dweller who finds the gift of total hi-tech communication a con with the raging voices of the ghetto is a new take on Bruce's populism and a welcome one. Adopting righteous preacher mode, he prowls the stage with guitar slung loose, taunting the crowd as the song closes with a stentorian sampled voice blaring "MAJOR DISGRACE, MAJOR DISGRACE."

What Springsteen's show has over that of other great white rock shows of recent times (U2, Neil Young) is a living body of songs that comment on each other, stories that make up a scarred collective memory. The isolation and dread that lies behind the narration in '57 Channels' plunges right into the mysterious loss and emptiness of 'The River' connecting two disparate, but beleaguered American communities.

Out of that, 'Living Proof' explodes as a joyous but scathing piece of grunge-powered redemption, belief found not just in the eyes of his new-born baby but also the power of the guitar which Springsteen plays with a previously only suggested lust, determination and mean, lean vengeance.

He talks a bit about how the new arrival brings responsibility, about parents trying to teach their kids about the world they live in, before introducing 'My Hometown'. The sense of community, the divisions and decay detailed therein are given furious voice in the song that follows, a surging elemental 'Badlands'. The refrain that's delivered in unison with the back-up singers *"The ones that bear the notion, the notion deep inside/That it ain't no sin to feel glad you're alive"* ends the first half of the show with an affirmative, hard won rallying call.

AFTER A 20-minute interval, he introduces the second half of the show as "the Neil Diamond half, for lovers only." But as you'd expect, Springsteen's take on love runs the gamut of emotions. There are several soul-flailing, exorcising epiphanies, most memorably when the roustabout mugging of 'Just Another Roll Of The Dice' subsides and he's on bended knee, his voice a torn, tremulous vibrato, the back-up singers delivering wounded supplication; pure James Brown dramatics.

The guitar-strumming wife makes a pointed entrance during the gloomy, deceit-riddled 'Brilliant Disguise'; 'With Every Wish' treads the cautious line between loss and possession, a line blown apart by the monstrous horror of loves and lives lost in America's urban wars in a wrenching 'Souls Of The Departed'. Three hours on and Springsteen shows no inclination towards stopping. Perversely, the most astonishing and invigorating performance of the evening came when he played a furious, garage thrashing 'Light Of Day', a seldom heard tune written for a Paul Schrader movie – mercurial, gauntlet-on-the-table stuff.

The rock 'n' roll cabaret cover versions that used to close the E Street Band show's are now absent – his own crowd pleasers 'Glory Days' and 'Hungry Heart' fulfil that function. But right up to the very last songs – 'Born To Run' and 'My Beautiful Reward' – Springsteen kept a handle on his role as dramatist and storyteller and the themes of escape and shared responsibility.

In one, an image of fleeting mystical release guides a middle-aged man; in the other, written nearly a decade previously, dreams of wanderlust and adventure fire a young man's dreams. Either way *"Together we'll live with the sadness and I'll love you with all the madness in my soul"* still sounds like a principle worth living by.

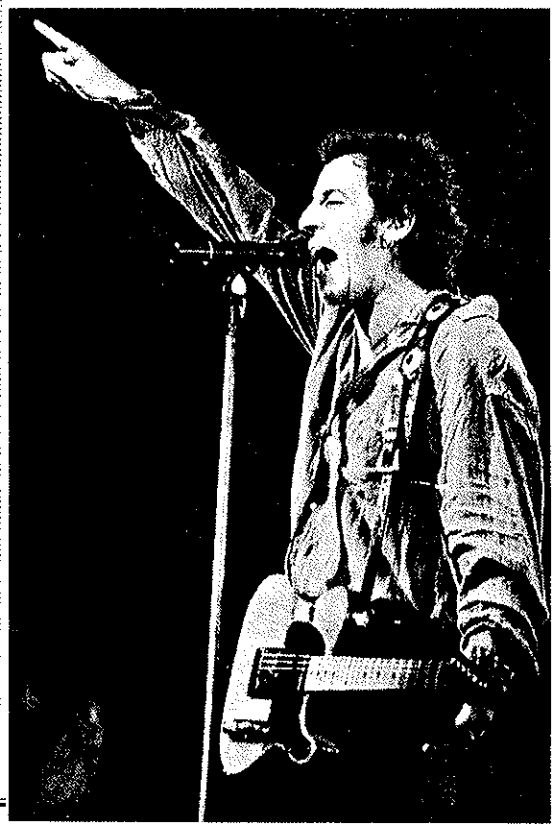
Gavin Martin

ES July 92

Loose Bruce

The image of Bruce Springsteen, good guy, man of the people, is on the line. The honest Joe who slept in a surfboard factory while paying his dues in New Jersey, and who once declared that he preferred the 'feeling of leanness and not draggin' too much stuff around', has just bought an $8.5-million mansion in Beverly Hills. He has divorced, expensively, from Julianne Phillips and entered into unseemly haggling with his second wife, Patti Scialfa, over how much she can claim if they divorce. He has sacked his mates, the E Street Band, and his fans were irritated by the mysterious four-year break between *Tunnel of Love* and this year's twin releases, *Human Touch* and *Lucky Town*. Membership of his fan club has fallen dramatically. But all is not lost. The new releases were mainly well received, even if the self-doubt in the lyrics has reached a perplexing pitch. And there is always the chance for Springsteen to redeem himself through his live act. Springsteen plays Wembley next week. It's an important gig for him.

Bruce Springsteen. 6-13 July: Wembley Arena, Empire Way, Wembley (081-900 1234).



BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

When Bruce Springsteen returned for his encore at the Bottom Line on May 6th a voice from the audience yelled, "Play something from the new album!" The club cracked up. For the last 90 minutes Springsteen had cranked out bare-knuckled versions of his new material and nothing but his new material. Springsteen debuted his new band in the same New York club where he launched *Born to Run* with a week of shows in 1975. "It's been a long time since I've been on this stage," he said. Then, glancing at the people staring up at him from the tables, he added, "Funny—it looks like all the same people are here." The crowd applauded and Springsteen deadpanned, "Except you all look a lot older and *I* look the same!"

Well, maybe nobody really looked the same (and maybe half the people who claimed to have been at those shows 17 years ago were lying), but as Springsteen tore through "Better Days," "Local Hero" and "Lucky Town" it was possible to believe he had not aged.

His new band is guitar-dominated in the great Rolling Stones tradition. Springsteen and Shane Fontayne traded leads all night while bassist Tommy [*cont'd on page 24*] [*cont'd from page 22*] Sims and drummer Zachary Alford kept the rhythm straight and hard. Roy Bittan, the lone holdover from the E Street Band, held back on the keyboards until about halfway through the set, when the grittier *Lucky Town* material gave way to upbeat songs like "Roll of the Dice" and "Man's Job." Springsteen had a little tuning trouble (which he blamed on living in Beverly Hills) and was astonished when his old Telecaster started giving him problems late in the set. "I can't believe it!" he said. "I've had this guitar for 20 years! I paid $185.00 for it. And I was pissed 'cause I thought I'd overpaid." But if the band was still finding its feet as a unit, the power of the material—and the passion of Springsteen's delivery—could not be denied.

Springsteen talked about the "justifiable rage" that had led to the riots in Los Angeles the week before as a lead-in to a haunting version of "If I Should Fall Behind." When his electric gave him trouble he asked for a Takamine acoustic and played a lovely solo "My Beautiful Reward," a song that he said his wife Patti refers to as his great disclaimer. After the set Springsteen mingled with the audience, posing for pictures and signing autographs. As impressive as it was to see Springsteen play a club set, by the end of the night it felt comfortable, too. As if, if all his celebrity vanished tomorrow, going back and starting over would be the most natural thing in the world.

—Bill Flanagan

Giles Smith

INDEPENDENT Wednesday 8 July 1992

The highway man

AT FIRST it sounds like booing, but it's not. It's the call of the Springsteen fan, a slow drone with ape-whoop undercurrents which builds until the entire arena throbs with it – "Brooooooooce". The fans do the call after songs and whenever Springsteen says anything. "I always saw my job as a long distance drive," croaked Springsteen near the end. "I'm still driving, and I'm glad you're still along for the ride." "Brooooooooce," said the fans.

It's four years since Bruce Springsteen's last British appearance, but the rituals are still intact – like the calling from the audience, and the car references from the stage. And like the length the concerts run to. Springsteen has always built shows as if they were some sort of physical endurance test. The present tour may be – to take up the metaphor – a mere bend in the giant highway of Bruce's career, but if you're along for the ride, you'll need a full tank of petrol. The concert runs in at about three hours and 10 minutes, not including the interval, nor the gap between the second part and the encores, which themselves last almost as long as the show they follow. And, though there is some danger of your dozing at the wheel midway, it's worth winding the window down and staying awake because (another Springsteen ritual) he saves his best until last.

With no unnecessary formalities (lights go down, band comes on, lights go up), Monday's show jump-started with a frisky version of "Better Days". But then we regressed immediately into the ponderous thud which is "Born in the USA", a song intended as an ironic tilt at rock anthems, but doomed to become the thing it mocked. The best you could say for it was, it was nice to have it out of the way early.

Springsteen was in a largely unbuttoned, floppy blue shirt and jeans; but then, nobody was expecting a cape and hotpants. A formidable silver cross occasionally swung into view on his chest, his only concession to glitter. The stage was frill-free, too. A white, multi-layered affair, it looked like the deck of a ship and provided Springsteen with ample room for swaggering around with his guitar slung down around his knees or hoisted on to one shoulder and pointing down to the ground like a cowboy's rifle. Needless to say, he still felt compelled to burst the boundaries from time to time, using some PA speakers to lift himself closer to those people ranged at the sides, and also leaping down into the photographers' pit, where fans at the front could lean over to ruffle his hair, while bouncers hovered suspiciously.

This tour may be a mere bend in the giant highway of Bruce's career, but if you're along for the ride, you'll need a full tank of petrol

Those who weren't so close were at least able to participate in the competition to recognise the songs before the band did. It took just one drag across the opening chord before people were on their feet acknowledging "Darkness on the Edge of Town", and marginally less before everyone spotted "The River", which Springsteen delivered legs apart, yanking his head back from the microphone between the lines with a stamp of the foot.

Still, for all the instant euphoria, you had to stave off the burdensome feeling that you had seen him do this all before and do it better. With the exception of Roy Bittan on keyboards, the E Street Band has dissolved off the scene, and with them has gone a good quantity of the group feel that Springsteen used to trade off. Early on, you appeared to be watching a set of disparate hired hands.

But as the show got older, the sound gelled and the band seemed to lock together – to such an extent that even the new material was sounding sparky. If Springsteen's career is a long-distance drive, then the most recent albums are widely held to be two of the most characterless Little Chef's he's ever pulled over for. "Lucky Town" has typical faults – a scrap of a melody, a wafer-thin lyric, it's a real lay-by on one of life's B-roads. But performed live (he used it to open the second half), it somehow found a spring for its step. "Leap of Faith" took off similarly, and "57 Channels" became a sort of miniature drama – all nervy percussion and slices of guitar, while Springsteen prowled the rim of the stage, looking for faces in the crowd to pin the lyrics on. In an unusual detour from the common run of things, the recordings were suddenly looking like demos for the live performances.

Back after the break, and now in a largely unbuttoned floppy *red* shirt and jeans, he stomped through a stormy version of "Cover Me". Then Patti Scialfa, his wife, sauntered on and joined him on guitar and backing vocals for "Brilliant Disguise", which seemed the cue for the show to loosen up altogether. "Glory Days" found him down in the photographers' pit again, this time leading the backing vocalists in a conga. The song stopped and then took off again something in the region of six times, working up to the traditional unfollowable climax. Which, for those versed in the rituals, was a sure sign that there was more to come – "Hungry Heart", for instance, and "Thunder Road" and "Born to Run", and "My Beautiful Reward". And only then did he leave the stage – naturally enough, to rapturous booing.

Bruce has seen better days

Rock

Bruce Springsteen: Wembley Arena

IS Bruce Springsteen washed up? There is a bandwagon which is implying as much. Certainly the magical sparkle that shone from Bruce was more like a flicker last night.

As it has been some time since he played under a roof in this country, we expected more intimacy and authority from the man they call The Boss.

But proximity couldn't mask one major disadvantage — his recent, simultaneously-released two albums are short on quality.

Now, a couple of weeks into his world tour, he appears to be reducing the emphasis on the new material.

Overall, it's a more abrasive sound. His voice is huskier and his almost completely new group of young musicians resemble a raw garage band more than the old E Street Band. What was missing was an epic feel.

Bruce is 42, but he looks considerably younger. His first outfit was — for him — a stylish, navy patterned shirt with the inevitable tight, black jeans and cowboy boots.

Better Days opened the show — it was rocking but not rousing. He wasn't taking any chances, for then came Born In The USA. But distortion and a metallic, acoustic mesh spoiled it. Local Hero, one of the best new songs, created a good old Bruce mood. He built on it with Darkness On The Edge Of Town.

The formula, a few newies and a few oldies, kept boredom at bay.

The days of Bruce narratives about cars and girls have largely gone. Introducing My Home Town, he talked about not wanting to make the same mistakes as his father did now that he was a daddy himself. It was a moving song, not because it was sentimental but because the romantic melody and his growly voice complimented each other.

The fervour and dedication is there as ever. Springsteen laughed and smiled, he bent those knees and danced with the guitar behind his back. He even leapt into the pit as he sang Leap Of Faith so that he could touch some of the crowd.

His second wife, Patti Scialfa, eventually made an appearance in the second half to sing Brilliant Disguise, a song about the disintegration of his first marriage. Nice touch of irony.

Springsteen is still possessed of wit and grace, and he's savvy enough not to throw all his past away, but his unnerving ability to sing about fears and hopes that could touch millions appears to have ebbed. Magic is something you can't plan. It wasn't there in abundance last night.

SPENCER BRIGHT

DAILY MAIL July 7/92

DAILY TELEGRAPH
FRIDAY, JULY 3, 1992 * * *

Rich man in a poor man's shirt

Bruce Springsteen's *Born in the USA* album sold 25 million copies and his concerts at Wembley next week are sold out. **Tony Parsons** on the music of one of rock 'n' roll's all-time greats

IN THE Seventies Bruce Springsteen sang of cars, girls and gangs. In the Eighties it was jobs, unwanted pregnancy and the broken dreams of blue-collar workers. In the Nineties he has wrestled with the problems of domestic bliss, living in Beverly Hills and having an estimated $150 million in the bank. Springsteen was once hailed as the future of rock 'n' roll. At nearly 43, is he now only part of its past?

Certain themes have surfaced in all of Springsteen's music. His work has grown up over the last 20 years — the rebellious sons have now become troubled fathers — but he has always concerned himself with what it means to be a man. And even more than this, he has struggled with what it means to be American. His image of his nation is heroic, mythic, epic — *The Grapes of Wrath* rather than *Wayne's World*.

"The American dream is the human dream," he told Rolling Stone magazine. "Everybody knows by now it's not about two cars in the garage. It's about people living and working together without stepping on each other."

His best songs are about big events in little lives — jobs that are lost, marriages that fail, love that gets left out for the garbage men. From sea to shining sea, his America is never quite big enough to escape from yourself.

"I know what it's like not to be able to do what you want to do. When I go home, that's what I see. I see my sister and her husband. They're living the lives of my parents in a certain kind of way. They've got kids. They're working hard. You can see something in their eyes. I asked my sister, 'What do you do for fun?' She said, 'I don't have any fun.' She wasn't kidding."

From 1975's *Born to Run* to 1992's *Human Touch* and *Lucky Town* (two CDs released on the same day), the traumas of ordinary people have held his heart. His personal circumstances may have changed, and this is reflected in his new music — on one of the new records he calls himself "a rich man in a poor man's shirt" — but his obsessions remain the same.

What has given Springsteen his power, what has made him one of rock's all-time greats, is that when he looks at his audience he sees himself. As someone said of Marlon Brando, Springsteen wears his sweat stains like heraldic crests.

Artistically, his most important record is 1980's *The River*. Rock is built on the cult of youth but on *The River* Springsteen ditched the *West Side Story* imagery and addressed himself to the problems of adults. Commercially, his highpoint was 1984's *Born in the USA*, which sold 25 million copies worldwide. The title track told of Vietnam veterans with no jobs and no hope.

There was real bitterness in the song. A college drop-out, Springsteen was the perfect age for Vietnam and only concussion sustained in a motorbike accident stopped him being shipped off to South-East Asia. He remembers being driven to the draft with a bus full of black teenagers. "I remember thinking, what makes our lives more expendable than that of somebody who's going to school? It didn't seem right."

Many could not see beyond *Born in the USA*'s rousing chorus and patina of patriotism. Chrysler offered Springsteen $12 million to use the song as a power jingle (the Boss, as his fans call him, turned them down) and both candidates in the 1984 presidential election spoke glowingly of Springsteen, endorsements that appalled him (humanitarian rather than party politics are his thing — he did a tour for Amnesty International).

More than any rock musician since Eddie Cochran, parents figure in Springsteen's work. But rather than Dad taking the keys to the car because you didn't do your homework, Springsteen sings of disappointment and ageing and frustration, men who hate their lives and who can't communicate with their own children.

Many of the bitter, disappointed emotions are inspired by his father Douglas Springsteen (the family are Irish-Italian) who was a prison guard, factory worker and bus driver when Bruce was growing up in New Jersey.

He says he once saw a picture of his father just after the Second World War and could not believe how happy and confident he looked. It was a man that Bruce never knew. Some of Springsteen's songs about father-son relationships — *Walk Like a Man*, *Independence Day*, *My Father's House* — are delivered with a poignancy that is almost unbearable. He gnaws at the theme like a Freudian in blue jeans.

At nine, Springsteen saw Elvis on the *Ed Sullivan Show* and witnessed a music that could "talk to kids in their secret heart", he said. He was never the same and remains one of the last great believers in the healing power of rock 'n' roll. "I found out very young what makes me happy. I stay very close to that. It just seems like the secret of the world."

A spectacularly spotty and unpopular youth, he spent his teenage years in his bedroom, practising the guitar until his fingers bled. He is probably the only veteran rock musician who has never smoked a joint. "Rock has never been a destructive thing for me. In fact, it was the first thing that gave me self-respect and strength."

Springsteen stepped through the looking-glass to glory and he can sometimes sound like a rock 'n' roll evangelist. But underpinning it all is a common decency and uncommon generosity. He met a waitress in Arizona with cancer who had medical bills of $100,000. Springsteen paid the bills in full.

His music exists beyond hedonism. The dream in Springsteen's music is of redemption. "He doesn't sing about fun," said Pete Townshend, "He sings about triumph."

His stance as a working-class hero is genuine but also a tad self-conscious. In his *I'm on Fire* video he cast himself as an oil-smeared mechanic being tempted by a rich woman. In the *Glory Days* video he is a crane-driver. Only someone who has escaped the working class could feel as sentimental about it as Springsteen does.

Although much has been made of Springsteen's move to Beverly Hills, he is probably no further from his roots than he has been for quite a while. He has been a millionaire for a good 10 years now. *Lucky Town* and *Human Touch* never stray too far from his great theme of what it means to be a US male while acknowledging his riches with humour ("A pirate's treasure and a life of leisure don't make much for tragedy").

His sporadic attempts at a life of glitzy pop stardom have failed miserably. He married the blonde actress-model Julianne Phillips but it didn't work out. She wanted Hollywood glory, Bruce wanted a family. During their split — a painful time that inspired *Tunnel of Love*, his best album — he fell in love with Patti Scialfa, the leggy redhead from New Jersey who sang his back-up vocals. They are now married with two small children and seem blissfully happy.

More than anyone, Springsteen has put flecks of grey into rock 'n' roll's greasy black quiff, he has made the music grow up, he has spoken to adults in their secret heart.

The ghost of rock music past? I think Springsteen is good for a few years yet. But we will never see his like again. Long may he run.

Bruce Springsteen plays Wembley Arena on July 6, 9, 10, 12 and 13

EVENING STANDARD
JULY 7/92

The new Boss has a humbler touch

Bruce Springsteen
Wembley Arena

MAX BELL

MEET the new Boss — he's not a bit like the old one. The once-familiar strain of swaggering noble savagery, which characterised Bruce Springsteen's work, hasn't entirely vanished. But he seems to have discovered humility, self-doubt and a growing awareness of what it takes to be a new kind of man.

Springsteen as ultimate car mechanic has been usurped by a soulful chap. He's done therapy, he's focused on analysis and he has stripped the ego in his engine back to basics.

Anyone who likes the abrasive blend of romance and hard-bitten realism in Springsteen '92, and can live with the shock of not seeing the E Street Band clowning around, must surely enjoy this show.

From the first number, Better Days, he was pointing out that "a life of leisure and a pirate's treasure don't make for tragedy", but was wearing such a broad smile that sentimental blabbering was at arm's length.

It doesn't take long to accept the new-look band. They give Bruce the juice to lose elements of his past without committing high treason. He now sounds like an artist who can re-evalute his repertoire without recourse to slap-dash resumes of any old crowd-pleasing crap.

Meanwhile, new material grows in stature on the boards. Even Born In The USA, that old favourite, survived a happy-go-lucky assassination attempt.

Local Hero on record is a sombre tale of redemption through rock star confusion, a none too subtle owning-up. Performed live, it kicked in with vaudeville flair, Roy Bittan's pounding piano giving the lie to accusations that Springsteen's new band relies on his synths, and also making it clear that rumours of any artistic demise have been foolishly exaggerated.

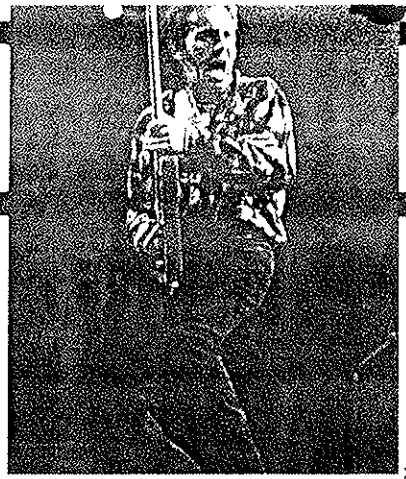
Patti Scialfa — "Mrs Boss" — made a brief appearance to duet on Brilliant Disguise and Human Touch.

From my seat Bruce Springsteen looked like a performer back at the top of his game.

MUSIC

HELLO! July 25/92

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN



PA

Many great artists defy expectation, and Bruce Springsteen is no exception.

One of the first rock 'n' roll stars to appear at Wembley Stadium, this year he decided to play several nights at the smaller arena next door. The result was a far greater rapport with his fans.

Since last performing here in the late Eighties, Bruce has married Patti Scialfa, and they've had two children. He obviously regards the last couple of years as the most important of his life.

This was apparent when he introduced the For Lovers Only section, complete with a joke about Neil Diamond not being the only person with the right to such a sentimental theme.

(Lovin' You's A) Man's Job and *Roll Of The Dice* came across far more forcefully in the live setting than on his recent *Human Touch* album. A fine piece of marriage guidance counselling preceded another new song, *If I Should Fall Behind*. One of his most touching tunes ever, it was sandwiched between the vintage *Darkness On The Edge Of Town* and the tongue-in-cheek *57 Channels* and *Nothing On*.

No Springsteen show would be complete without the familiar stompers such as *Born In The USA*, featuring his superb lead guitar playing.

Having broken up with the E-Street Band, the onus was on Bruce more than ever — no mean feat for a three-and-a-half hour show.

The second half included old favourites like *Glory Days* and *Hungry Heart*, not to mention occasional leaps into the crowd. The Boss also spent a considerable amount of time giggling like a schoolboy, chucking about his children, and revealing the joys of family life.

Then just when you began to wonder if the old trouper had gone soft, he concluded with a couple of classics which served as sharp reminders that his nick-name still serves him well

For the final encore, Bruce delivered a rousing version of *Born To Run* in a way which suggested that, whatever the virtues of family life, there's still nothing to compare with the spirit of rock 'n' roll.

DAILY EXPRESS Tuesday July 7 1992

Born-to-run Bruce now teeters on the brink of middle age

By FRANCES HUSBARD

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN took the stage at Wembley Arena last night with a lot to prove.

It is more than four years since his Tunnel Of Love tour. His two latest albums have been labelled duds and all but one of his original E Street Band are missing from his backing line-up.

The critics, like vultures, were waiting to pick over the corpse of America's greatest living rocker.

Worrying signs of the Boss's decline has been spotted in his sudden fondness for long-sleeved shirts — Springsteen isn't Springsteen without a show of sweaty biceps — and *clean* Levis.

Could it be that the boy from Asbury Park, Noo Joizy, is drifting from his hard rocking, blue-collar roots?

By the end of the evening those wanting to strip meat from his bones were disappointed. The Boss may be an older, balder and more subdued character these days, but he still generates enough heat to set an audience ablaze. Eventually.

The crowd was more than willing to be ignited. The roar that broke from 12,000 late-20s and 30s-something throats when their idol strutted on in black denims and a silk shirt was deafening.

So were the frantic cries of "Bru-u-u-uce". It sounded like "Boo" and perhaps this latter-day working-class hero deserved a rap over the knuckles for selling tickets at £22.50 a head, with programmes at a hefty £8.

The reception to his first song, from the new Lucky Town album, was more polite than ecstatic. There was just token dancing in the aisles and even that was soon slapped down by bouncers.

Only when Bruce crouched under red, white and blue spotlights to pick out the opening strains of Born in the USA did any real enthusiasm spread through the ranks. Arms went up to punch the air and a thousand be-jeaned bottoms jiggled in unison.

A certain reticence remained, however. Even when Springsteen thrust his guitar into the front row, not one hand reached out to grab at his cowboy boots.

The old numbers, with Bruce belting out his stuff square to the microphone, were consistently more popular than his latest material. New refinements, like bongo drum solos and a rap-style voice-over, were treated with mild bemusement.

When he finally sang The River, there was a collective sigh of relief. Great Bruce at last.

The sad fact is that the Boss, now a 42-year-old father of two, is teetering on the brink of that rock'n'roll abyss, middle-age. He has all kinds of adult things to say. The audience just isn't very keen to hear them.

When he introduced My Home Town, he shuffled bashfully as he talked of his son, Evan, and his daughter, Jessica. "There's a lot more to this goddammed world than records," he intoned. "This song is dedicated from my children to your children."

Please, Bruce. Not even grandad Mick Jagger goes in for that stuff in public.

It never got that bad. Bruce still has enough power to remind you he's a modern legend. He's just a little slower and more mellow than of old.

He might have been born to run, but these days he's content to jog.

Bruce proving he could still belt out the hits last night

OLD SONGS ARE JUST

THE TICKET FOR SPRINGSTEEN

Review by ISLA WHITCROFT at Wembley Arena

TEN minutes before the kick-off on Bruce Springsteen's first night the tannoy was still announcing that there were tickets left.

It could have been the recession, or it could have been that The Boss just couldn't command the sort of following he had whipped up on his last visit here during the Tunnel Of Love tour.

Whatever the reason there was no doubting the fervour of his followers that were there. From the moment the rather slight figure dressed in tight drainpipe trousers and a flimsy shirt burst onto the stage, they were beside themselves.

But even their devotion couldn't compensate for the lack of good new material. Springsteen — and the crowd — only really came alive when he performed his old songs. As if drummed out a tribal rhythm. For one awful moment I thought Springsteen was going to metamorphosise into Sting — but it was only a prelude to an even messier 57 Channels.

The response from the crowd in the first half was deservedly half-hearted.

It was a show of two parts — the old brilliance and the new mediocrity. And halfway through the second half the brilliance, so far just briefly glimpsed, was on show for all to see.

The crowd began to warm up and for the first time so did he.

His wife Patti Scialfa appeared on stage and the duo sang Cover Me and Human Touch to an appreciatively silent crowd.

By the time he moved into the first of his finales, Glory Days, he was skipping around the stage like a teenager, leading his backing singers on an impromptu dance.

Bruce kept the fans going with a cheerful rendition of Hungry Heart, graciously allowing the crowd to sing the first verse while he conducted from the stage.

He then took centre stage and with keyboard player Roy Bitten, he sang a tear-jerking slow version of Thunder Road, before breaking into Born To Run for a fitting climax. At long last the crowd had what they had come for — the oldies.

Thankfully, Bruce steered clear of the lasers, videos and flying props that characterise most of today's superstar performances — and won over the crowd with his good, old-fashioned charisma.

And, being the consummate showman that he is, nobody went home unhappy.

TODAY July 7/92

Maybe The Boss wasn't born to run on

Neil Spencer sees Bruce Springsteen full of *joie de vivre* in Paris, but beginning to show signs of wear and tear

AS Bruce Springsteen will testify, being 'The Boss' has its problems. Everyone wants your job, and this summer three other pop heavyweights — U2, Prince and Michael Jackson — are all stalking the world's arenas to prove just who is the mega-most of them all.

In this stadium showdown, Springsteen has arguably most to lose. This year's twin albums, *Human Touch* and *Lucky Town*, proved clumsy, unadventurous affairs and languish in the lower regions of the transatlantic charts, while his decision to dump his long-standing backing group, The E Street Band, was greeted with dismay by the faithful. The Boss, it seemed, had lost his touch.

Arena rock, however, is Bruce's turf. His three-hour, high energy shows have been the stuff of legend since he swaggered to international fame in the mid-Seventies, heralded as 'the future of rock and roll'.

To prove he is still part of rock's present, Springsteen chooses to do without the techno-wizardry of his rivals. Not for him a phalanx of video screens, a battery of TV sets or a stage-set out of an Escher painting. Ever the traditionalist, Bruce remains content to go to work with a minimal band, a few fancy lights and a bloody big PA system.

His current show emphasises again that he is one of rock's consummate showmen while failing to resolve doubts over his musical direction. Always more of an inspired writer than a musical sophisticate, he now seems content with an accompaniment of mind-numbing banality for his songs, in which the loudest instrument by far is a metronomic drumbeat. Even keyboardist Roy Bittan, the only survivor of the E Street Band, has little to do beyond shade in a few chords on his synth.

The most important instrument of all, Bruce's voice, seems eroded by the years of high-pressure gigging. It remains powerful and huskily emotive, but the rich swell of a Presley or an Orbison, to which he used to aspire, now seems beyond reach. One reason, perhaps, for the five-strong team of back-up vocalists.

The crowd, at least, has no doubts. In time-honoured fashion, the 15,000 fans in the Palais Omnisports respond to every up-tempo number with a sea of punching arms and to every slow ballad with a firmament of upheld cigarette lighters. It was enough that their hero was there and delivering.

'Always more of an inspired writer than a musical sophisticate, he seems content with an accompaniment of mind-numbing banality for his songs'

Deliver he does. At 42, Springsteen's floor-rolling and piano-jumping antics are behind him (though he still climbs the speaker stacks), but from the moment the band kick start into 'Better Days', he maintains an intense presence, a wiry figure creeping round the stage in jeans, gypsy shirt and dagger-pointed cowboy boots.

Without his old accomplices to bounce off, the new act is more of a one-man show than ever, and though Springsteen occasionally wanders across to lock fretboards with shaggy guitarist Shane Fontyne, and later duets with his wife Patti Scialfa on a moving 'Brilliant Disguise', the impression is of a man alone.

Though new material dominates, the show is in part a tribute to his own prolific output, and past hits like 'The River' still resonate powerfully. He prefaces 'Born in the USA' with a quote from Hendrix's mangled version of 'The Star Spangled Banner', as if to disassociate it from the misinterpretation that led Ronald Reagan to quote approvingly from the song; and 'Dancing in the Dark' is played solo with throwaway ease, transforming it from rock anthem to first-person confessional.

Almost alone of his peers and successors, Springsteen is able to lay tangible claim to America's sprawling musical heritage, to invoke the itinerant folk soul of Woody Guthrie alongside the innocence and exuberance of Fifties teen anthems. Calling on back-up singer Bobby King to trade call-and-response vocals, Springsteen makes 'Man's Job', a routine rocker from the *Human Touch* album, into a storming soul strut.

The longer the show goes on, the more pronounced the gospel and R&B influences become, until at the jubilant climax Springsteen is prowling the stage bawling like a backwoods preacher before dropping the tempo for a haunting 'My Beautiful Reward' and sending a Dylanesque harmonica solo ringing round the stadium.

The comparison with Dylan, which has long dogged Springsteen, remains instructive. The arch-bard of rock is also still on the road, but a sour, apparently embittered figure. By contrast, Springsteen exudes an uncomplicated warmth and *joie de vivre*. For him at least, one suspects, whether he remains boss or not no longer really matters.

Bruce Springsteen plays Wembley Arena tomorrow, Thursday and Friday and 12 and 13 July.

THE OBSERVER July 5/92

9th JULY, WEMBLEY ARENA (BRUCE) ...with apologies to 'Sandy'!

All those years. All those miles. All those stories. All those songs. All those nights without sleep. All those beers. This is my story...

Hurry up, hurry up, here we go
All aboard 'cause we're hittin' the road

So here I was, almost four years down the line from the Tunnel Of Love Express Tour, and starting into it all over again. After many rumours and false starts Bruce was finally touring again and coming to the UK. Could this news make me look forward to a week of food and sleep deprivation? You better believe it! And it was bye bye Belfast, we were airborne!

Swing low chariot, come down easy
Taxi to the terminal zone
Cut your engines and cool your wings
And let me make it to the telephone

Due to work commitments I was only able to make it over for the last four of the five shows at Wembley. By this time all of the crowd I was staying with - hereafter referred to as the Human Town Gang - had been to at least one show already and were all brimming with enthusiasm. I tried not to ask too many questions - wanna keep it all as a surprise! Never mind London, at last I was ready for Bruce Springsteen!

Have you heard the news?
There's good rockin' tonight!

The pre-show rendezvous was in the bar of the Hilton hotel just a short walk from Wembley Arena. Entering the hotel I had a flashback to June 1988 - lordy, so much had happened since I had last set foot in here. The Hilton bar was wall-to-wall Springsteen tour shirts and it was here that I found Steve and Phil holding court and dispensing wisdom and concert tickets in equal quantities.

At last it was showtime and after picking up a couple of ridiculously priced T-shirts I made my way to my seat. Not a bad location, on the balcony to the left but just about parallel to the front of the stage. Questions whirled through my mind - what would it be like to see Bruce indoors? What would the new songs sound like performed live, what would the band be like? I didn't have long to ponder as the lights suddenly went out and there he was. Brooooooce!

Well when you hear that music
You just can't sit still
If your brother won't rock then your sister will
Whoo! C'mon, everybody!

The first set was just a blur as the rush of adrenalin swept me away. A tremendous opener in Better Days, a stinging Local Hero, an excellent new arrangement of Dancing In The Dark, a thoughtful If I Should Fall Behind, a superb Living Proof, My Hometown dedicated from his children to our children, into the crowd for Leap Of Faith, and then the dreaded Man's Job and Roll Of The Dice (which I actually quite enjoyed!). All my fears vanished - Bruce could still do it, the new songs worked well live and the band sounded great.

I changed my mind, this works fine
Goodness gracious, great balls of fire!

After a quick visit to the bar I got back to my seat just in time for the second set. This turned out to be even better than the first set and included a great Lucky Town, a poignant Brilliant Disguise, a solo medley of nursery rhymes before With Every Wish, a passionate Tougher Than The Rest, the 'so corny I nearly left it off the album' Real Man, and crashed to a close with Light Of Day.

Then he was back for the encores and the 'killer cuts' came one after the other. The ~~Big~~ Little Wo-man took the sax solo in Born To Run and a tender My Beautiful Reward finished the show.

When the clock strikes 12, we'll cool off friends
Start rockin' round the clock again

The first Bruce concert after such a long time made it a very special night for me but the enthusiasm continued for the remaining three shows, and they just kept getting better! On Friday night Lucky Town was moved into the first set and Born In The USA was shunted into the second set where it worked very well following up a pounding Souls Of The Departed. Towards the end of Light Of Day Bruce launched into the I Hear A Train routine which nearly brought the house down.

Meanwhile, I was still thinkin'
If it's a slow one, we'll omit it
But if it's a rocker, that'll get it

Sunday's show gave us a chilling Big Muddy in place of The River during the first set. At the end of Living Proof I headed out to the phones and called home. Bruce's touching dedication 'This is from my children to your children' during the introduction to My Hometown was something I wanted to share with my long-suffering wife and 1½ year old son back at home.

Well all right, let people know
About the dreams and wishes you wish
In the night when lights are low

Suddenly it was Monday and there was only one more show left. I hoped for something special and Bruce didn't let me down. He was in rocking form from the word go and tonight's first set was the best yet. The second set kicked off with a rousing Prove It All Night and Bruce giving it all on guitar. Human Touch appeared for only the second time at Wembley (and the first time for me) and Glory Days seemed to go on and on forever - Bruce was having a ball! Then came the highlight of the whole show for me as, introduced as 'a song I learnt from an old Elvis Presley record', Bruce sang Follow That Dream with some very effective backing vocals from Bobby King and the girls. One last My Beautiful Reward and then he was gone. It was all over.

Bye bye Johnny
Goodbye Johnny B Goode

Of course there's more to the Bruce experience than just the shows, there's meeting up with old friends and making new ones. I had the pleasure of doing lots of both and the time spent with Dan, Jon, Mike, Eileen, Dave and Michael (sounds like a 60s pop group!) made my trip truly memorable. I can still remember...how the floor of Dan's flat seemed to get softer and more comfortable every night... wondering how such vast quantities of toast and coffee could come from such a small kitchen every morning....marvelling at how I managed to survive for six days on a diet of burgers, pizza and donuts...the disappointment after each show when we found that the squid wasn't available...the frustration of continually finding ourselves singing Real Man despite hating the song, and the feeling of triumph when the Living 3.4% Proof tour tribute was finally just perfect.

Anyway, that's the rehearsals out of the way. When does the real thing start??

Paul Trimble
somewhere in Human Town
N. Ireland